

## **Monuments and Ceremonies Commission**

### **Minutes, June 12, 2012 Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Phil Kraft at 3:30 PM with the following Commissioners present: Marian Castell, Ed Carabillo, John Geoghegan, Roland Holub, Dave Polett, Karen Polett, Bob Riith, Charles Scribner, Becky Siciliano, and Sueann Schorr. Prospective Parade Committee members, Geoff Ball, and Terry Gaffney were welcomed. Another new volunteer, Sara Francese could not attend today's meeting, but met with Phil last week.

Minutes of the May 8, 2012 meeting were accepted as read on a motion by Roland Holub, second David Polett.

It is hoped that Sara Francese, Geoff Ball, Terry Gaffney and Sueann Schorr will form the nucleus of the Memorial Day Parade Sub- Committee for the 2013 Parade. This will allow our Commission to focus on preserving and maintaining the monuments in the Town of Darien and to also better plan the various ceremonies for the Town.

Detailed discussion of the Memorial Day Parade ensued with the following comments and suggestions to improve next year's Parade.

1. Get lease and permits/permissions from property owners out earlier next year. The town attorney wanted to review the wording for this year.
2. Place reviewing stand closer to the road and perhaps order a bunting and another railing for this so it is easier for Parade participants to see.
3. SOS members were terrific and extremely helpful
4. Parade official hats worked and easily identified who was in charge
5. Gallavant had \$30. worth of candy to throw despite strict wording in Parade information sheet against this dangerous behavior. A child running into the road to fetch this candy could be injured. Safety is a primary concern.
6. Vendors might be encouraged to sell more patriotic merchandise. Poppers and silly string thrown at Parade participants by the bystanders is a real danger.

7. Veterans could wear a carnation or a poppy or some kind of uniform to identify them within the Senior Men's Group
8. Education for certain adults calling out, "Happy Memorial Day" should be considered. This Parade is a tribute to veterans, and the entire Parade and its participants should be treated with respect and dignity and a high level of decorum.
9. Dogs in the Parade need to have water readily available. This year, the road surface was really too hot for the pads of the dog's feet and a vehicle should be provided for them.
10. Applause for the veterans was greatly appreciated by all
11. Grand Marshall reciting the Pledge of Allegiance is a great idea and should be continued
12. Is there a shadier place in the cemetery for the platform?
13. Several ideas were presented about how to get better attendance at the cemetery. Mentioned were sponsoring an essay contest, or asking a member of each participating group to send a representative to sit on the cemetery platform. These ideas need to be explored by next year's Parade Committee.
14. Patriot Brass Ensemble, paid for by the Masonic Club of Darien, won many compliments on their excellent rendition of patriotic music. Perhaps, they can play music at the cemetery while the Parade is moving along the Post Road. They would need to be in the First Division.
15. Perhaps the Fire Chiefs could hold off their picnics until after the cemetery ceremony.
16. Division 2 needs more room in the lineup and Division 4 did not need as much space as was allotted to them.

Members expressed their outrage and concern regarding the recent error by the Housing Authority in allowing the Gettysburg Tree to be cut and chipped at the former Fitch Home for Soldiers on Noroton Avenue. (See extensive news coverage of this mistake by Darien Times in May minutes) This tree was lovingly cared for and planted by then Darien Historian, Bob Fatherley, and former Darien First Selectman, Hank Sanders and other members of the Monuments Committee at the time. Karen had contacted Nicholas Bellantoni, CT State Archaeologist who is checking with the State Preservation Office to be sure they reviewed this housing project. The construction crew should be alerted to be looking for historic artifacts left on this site of the former Fitch Home for Soldiers, which dates back to the Civil War.

Phil announced that CT State Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, Linda Schwartz had come to Darien and is going to pay for the repair of the cracked base of the Lang monument in the Veterans' Cemetery. She has also obtained a new monument for the Darien's Veterans' Cemetery. A stone marker with a profile of Lincoln and the entire Gettysburg Address on it has already been erected. Ms. Schwartz hopes to obtain a sapling from the Gettysburg Witness Tree to plant behind this marker. She was most concerned about the recent mistake made when the Gettysburg Memorial tree planted in 1992, at the former Fitch Home for Soldiers (Allen O'Neill)

was mistakenly chipped when the moderate income housing site was being prepared. She hopes this new tree planted in the cemetery will be better protected than the 1992 tree was. Currently, this new memorial will be dedicated on July 1, at 11:00 AM. A Troop of Civil War reenactors and a Lincoln reenactor will be present for this dedication.

Three Girl Scouts, Katie Schorr, Lorrena DeCaprio, and Isabell Sutherland attended the meeting and presented a proposal to inventory, update and catalog Darien's Monuments as a Scout Project. The girls will take photographs, research the history of each monument and find its location on a map which they plan to add to the Town of Darien site. This proposal was met with great enthusiasm and approved on a motion by Holub, second D. Polett. ( See attached sample) The girls will report on their progress at our September 4, 2012 meeting.

Karen will obtain a wreath from Springdale Florists for the Marine Memorial to be held on Saturday, June 16 at 1:00 PM at Pear Tree Point Beach. Jim Baker of the Darien Boat Club is in charge of this.

Karen and David Polett volunteered to contact Dave Campbell about the Tokeneke Bridge plaque so that it can be placed someplace near the Norwalk/Darien border in 2012, which is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the plaque. A base needs to be constructed quickly.

Flag Day will be celebrated at 6:30 PM on Thursday, June 14, at the Veteran's Circle in front of the Darien Town Hall. At that time, the VFW will receive any old and tattered flags for proper disposal.

Plans for the 9/11 Memorial ceremony at 8:30 AM on that day at the monument located behind the Middlesex MiddleSchool will be discussed and finalized at the September 4, meeting. Karen will order 2 dozen roses from Springdale Florist for the 9/11 date. The Monuments and Ceremonies Commission does not meet in July or August. It is hoped that the newly formed Parade Sub-Committee will begin meeting and preparing for the 2013 Parade. Our Commission will assist.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM on a motion by John Geoghegan, second, Roland Holub. The next meeting will be held at the Darien Town Hall at 3:30 PM on September 4, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Kreitzberger Polett

Secretary